

## CHAPTER

### VIII<sup>1</sup> 1815.

#### THE BATTLES OF LIGNY AND QUATRE BRAS.

THE moment for striking a decisive blow had now come, and accordingly, early on the morning of the 15th, the whole of the French army was in motion.<sup>2</sup> The 2d corps proceeded to Marchiennes to attack the Prussian outposts at Thuin and Lobes, in order to secure the communication across the Sambre between those places. The 3d corps, covered by General Pajol's cavalry, advanced upon Charleroi, followed by the Imperial Guard and the 6th corps, with the necessary detachments of pontonniers. The remainder of the cavalry, under Grouchy,

<sup>1</sup> Like the preceding, this chapter first appeared in the 1836 edition, and is not from the pen of M. de Bourrienne.

<sup>2</sup> At daybreak on the 15th of June (the date should be remarked), General Bourmont and two officers of his staff, the Adjutant-Commandant Clouey and the *chef d'escadron* Villoutreys, went over to the enemy. Though the Allies were well informed of the exact strength of Napoleon, and though the real date of this desertion, often placed on the 14th of June, shows that it could not have had the importance sometimes attached to it, still it must have had a most disheartening effect on the troops. Bourmont's conduct was especially base. He had been a leader of the Vendéens, and had accepted the amnesty granted by Napoleon in 1800. Alleged to be concerned in the plot of the infernal machine, he had fled to Portugal. In 1808, when Junot entered Portugal, Bourmont joined him, and Junot obtained his appointment to the staff of the army in Naples (*Junot*, vol. iii. p. 193). He served well, and attained the rank of General of Division. His seeking re-appointment (see *Lavallette*, vol. ii. p. 177, and *Rapp*, p. 349), and so soon deserting his post in the very face of the enemy, can only be accounted for by his placing his attachment to the Bourbons over all military honor. His reception in 1815 by Blücher is said to have been of the roughest, as the old Marshal, when his attention was called to the white cockade borne by Bourmont, answered, "All the same, whatever badge one stitches on him, a scoundrel always remains a scoundrel" (see *Quatre Bras, Ligny, and Waterloo*, p. 41). The Bourbons, who had made Dupont, who had surrendered at Baylen, Minister of War in 1814, gave the same appointment to Bourmont in 1829. He commanded the army which took Algiers in 1830, and received the baton of *Marechal* just before the revolution of July. It is pleasant to know by Marmont's *Mémoires* (tome viii. pp. 214-231) that this appointment of Bourmont to the command at Algiers was a bitter disappointment to the Marshal, who considered his desertion in 1814 gave him greater claims than that of Bourmont in 1815. The high-minded Marmont would have resigned his post as Chief of the Staff to show his disgust, only he could not afford to give up the pay.